THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Government has kept the international community, including the United States, informed about Pakistani involvement in fomenting cross border terrorism in India, particularly in the context of the global campaign against terrorism. There is now increasing realization of the fact that despite professions to the contrary, Pakistan remains deeply involved with terrorist groups. The widespread consensus in the international community is that there is no justification for terrorism, which must be eradicated wherever it exists.

(c) While Pakistan has taken some cosmetic and superficial measures as part of their so-called 'crack down' against terrorist groups in Pakistan, its sponsorship of cross border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India has continued unabated. The Pakistani leaders including its President have also reverted to Pakistan's time-worn and untenable formulations on terrorism, including seeking to justify continued terrorist violence in Jammu & Kashmir.

Visit of Shimon Perez to India

†2708. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Shimon Perez the External Affairs Minister of Israel has of date made a visit to India; and

(b) if so, the issues discussed with him?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes Sir, The last time Mr. Shimon Perez Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Israel visited India was from 7—11 January, 2002. He had come to India to participate in the CII Partnership Summit in Bangalore. He utilised the opportunity to visit New Delhi to brief the Indian leadership on the current situation in the West Asia and the status of the Middle East Peace

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Process. He also conveyed Israel's condemnation to 13 December attack on the Indian Parliament.

Delay in SAARC Conference

†2709. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 'SAARC' Conference organised in Kathmandu began one day after its scheduled time;

(b) if so, the reason therefor; and

(c) Government's reaction in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir; because of the late arrival of one participating Head of State.

(b) India agreed to the new timing for the Inaugural Session as proposed by Nepal, the host government.

Indo-China bilateral relations

2710. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether China has decided to accord high priority to develop and strengthen its relations with India on bilateral basis;

(b) if so, whether addressing a press conference on the 8th February, 2002, the Chinese envoy has pointed out that the Prime Minister of China had recently visited India with the objective of setting new directions for strengthening bilateral relations was satisfied with the outcome of the discussion with the Prime Minister;

(c) whether this is a welcome measure; and

(d) if so, to what extent relations between the two countries have further improved?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.